



US009456934B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Lakso

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,456,934 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Oct. 4, 2016**

(54) **METHOD OF PRODUCING AN ABSORBENT GARMENT, AND AN ABSORBENT GARMENT PRODUCED ACCORDING TO THE METHOD**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC A61F 13/4906; A61F 13/49061;
A61F 13/49011; A61F 13/49012; A61F
13/51305

See application file for complete search history.

(71) Applicant: **SCA HYGIENE PRODUCTS AB,**
Göteborg (SE)

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

(72) Inventor: **Elisabeth Lakso,** Stenungsund (SE)

4,692,368 A 9/1987 Taylor et al.
4,842,596 A 6/1989 Kielpikowski et al.

(73) Assignee: **SCA HYGIENE PRODUCTS AB,**
Gothenburg (SE)

(Continued)

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 73 days.

EP 0 714 351 6/1996
EP 0 715 351 A1 6/1996

(Continued)

(21) Appl. No.: **14/094,924**

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

(22) Filed: **Dec. 3, 2013**

International Search Report of PCT/SE2007/001009 dated Aug. 7, 2008.

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2014/0088537 A1 Mar. 27, 2014

(Continued)

Primary Examiner — Lynne Anderson

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC

Related U.S. Application Data

(62) Division of application No. 12/739,594, filed as application No. PCT/SE2007/001009 on Nov. 14, 2007.

(57)

ABSTRACT

An absorbent garment has a chassis structure including a front panel having a front end edge, a back panel having a back end edge, a crotch panel arranged between the front and back panels. Elasticated front and back waist panels are arranged along the front and back end edges, and a core component is integrated with the chassis structure. The chassis structure also has a liquid permeable material having a garment facing side and a user facing side and forming a liquid permeable surface layer in the garment. The liquid permeable material extends continuously between the front end edge and the back end edge, and at least one of the front panel and the back panel includes an elastic web that has been bonded to the liquid permeable material with the elastic web stretched by 35-250% in at least one direction.

11 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets

(51) **Int. Cl.**

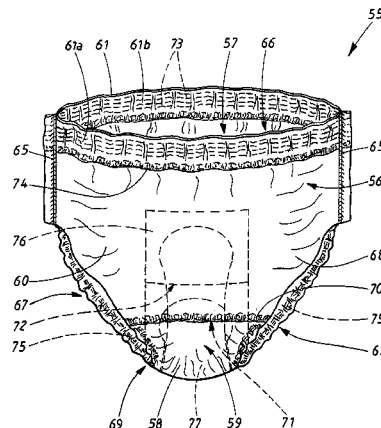
A61F 13/49 (2006.01)

A61F 13/513 (2006.01)

(Continued)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **A61F 13/49011** (2013.01); **A61F 13/15593** (2013.01); **A61F 13/15699** (2013.01); **A61F 13/51305** (2013.01); **A61F 13/4906** (2013.01); **A61F 13/51113** (2013.01); **A61F 2013/153** (2013.01); **Y10T 156/1084** (2015.01)



(51) **Int. Cl.***A61F 13/15* (2006.01)*A61F 13/511* (2006.01)(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

4,940,464 A 7/1990 Van Gompel et al.
 5,143,679 A 9/1992 Weber et al.
 5,156,793 A 10/1992 Beull et al.
 5,167,897 A 12/1992 Weber et al.
 5,422,172 A 6/1995 Wu
 5,545,158 A * 8/1996 Jessup 604/385.3
 5,592,690 A 1/1997 Wu
 5,634,216 A 6/1997 Wu
 5,733,628 A 3/1998 Pelkie
 5,861,074 A 1/1999 Wu
 6,054,727 A 4/2000 Voss
 6,083,212 A * 7/2000 Kumasaka 604/385.29
 6,149,637 A 11/2000 Allen et al.
 6,306,122 B1 * 10/2001 Narawa et al. 604/385.3
 6,313,372 B1 11/2001 Suzuki
 6,336,922 B1 * 1/2002 VanGompel et al. 604/385.3
 6,364,863 B1 * 4/2002 Yamamoto et al. 604/385.27
 6,375,646 B1 * 4/2002 Widlund et al. 604/385.3
 7,008,496 B2 3/2006 Morman
 7,875,136 B2 1/2011 Toerstensson et al.
 8,303,561 B2 11/2012 Eriksson
 2002/0092604 A1 7/2002 McCabe et al.
 2003/0105446 A1 6/2003 Hutson et al.
 2003/0226862 A1 12/2003 Vogt et al.
 2004/0112509 A1 6/2004 Morman
 2004/0127528 A1 7/2004 Eriksson et al.
 2004/0158217 A1 * 8/2004 Wu et al. 604/385.01
 2004/0230171 A1 11/2004 Ando et al.
 2004/0241389 A1 12/2004 Chung et al.
 2005/0101216 A1 5/2005 Middlesworth et al.
 2005/0103436 A1 5/2005 Otsubo et al.
 2005/0131379 A1 * 6/2005 Otsubo et al. 604/387

2005/0224171 A1 10/2005 Hoshika et al.
 2006/0083900 A1 4/2006 Ashraf
 2006/0108054 A1 5/2006 Ukegawa
 2006/0148358 A1 7/2006 Hall et al.
 2006/0148361 A1 7/2006 Ng et al.
 2006/0149208 A1 7/2006 Carr
 2009/0182298 A1 * 7/2009 Kumasaka A61F 13/496
 604/385.23
 2009/0326503 A1 12/2009 Lakso et al.

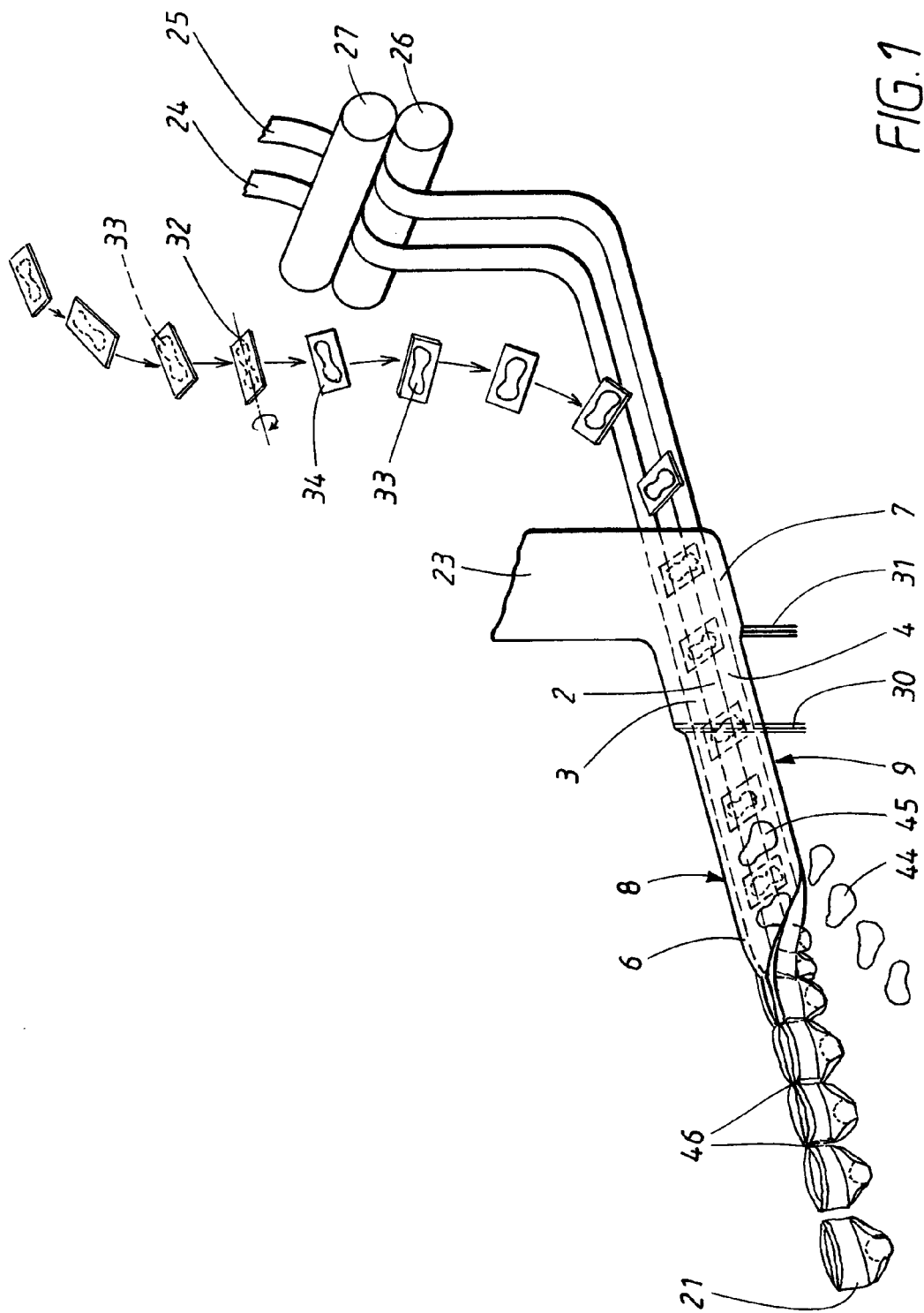
FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

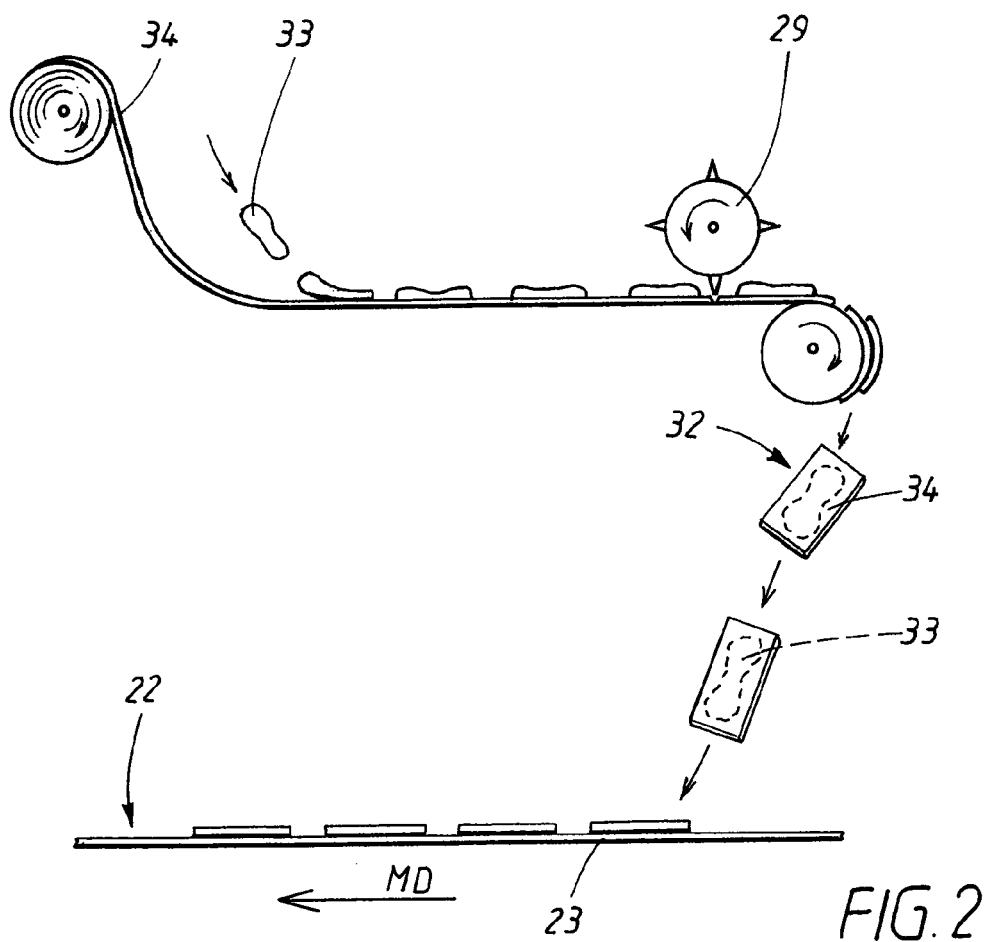
EP 1 688 113 8/2006
 WO WO 95/04654 2/1995
 WO WO 95/18589 7/1995
 WO WO 00/45764 8/2000
 WO WO 02/02021 1/2002
 WO WO 03/047488 A1 6/2003
 WO WO 03/070140 A1 8/2003
 WO WO 2004/078083 A1 9/2004
 WO WO 2005/122985 12/2005
 WO WO 2006/036090 A1 4/2006
 WO WO 2006/073528 7/2006
 WO WO 2006/093440 A1 9/2006
 WO WO 2007/133127 A1 11/2007
 WO WO 2008/060204 A1 5/2008
 WO WO 2008/060205 A1 5/2008

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Written Opinion of the International Searching Authority of PCT/SE2007/001009 dated Aug. 7, 2008.
 International Preliminary Report on Patentability of PCT/SE2007/001009 dated Feb. 5, 2010.
 K. Eriksson, U.S. Appl. No. 12/739,555, entitled "Method for Producing an Absorbent Garment, and an Absorbent Garment Produced According to the Method" filed Apr. 23, 2010.

* cited by examiner





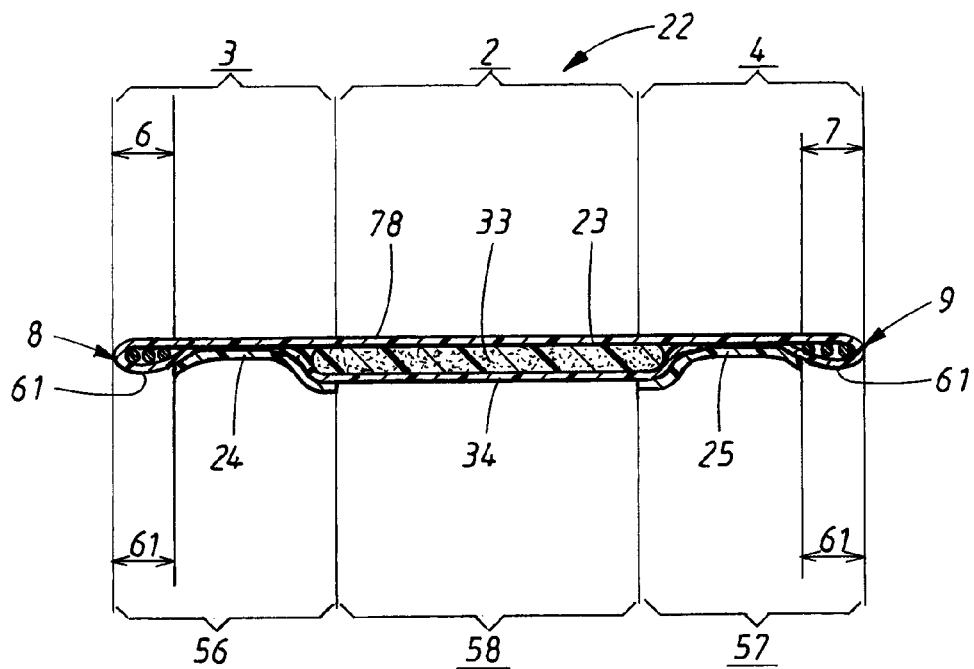


FIG. 3

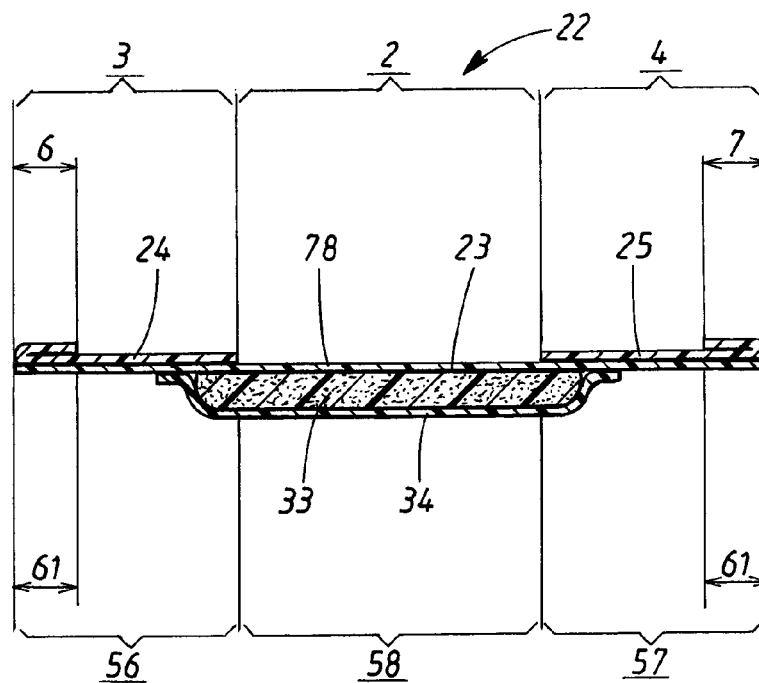


FIG. 4

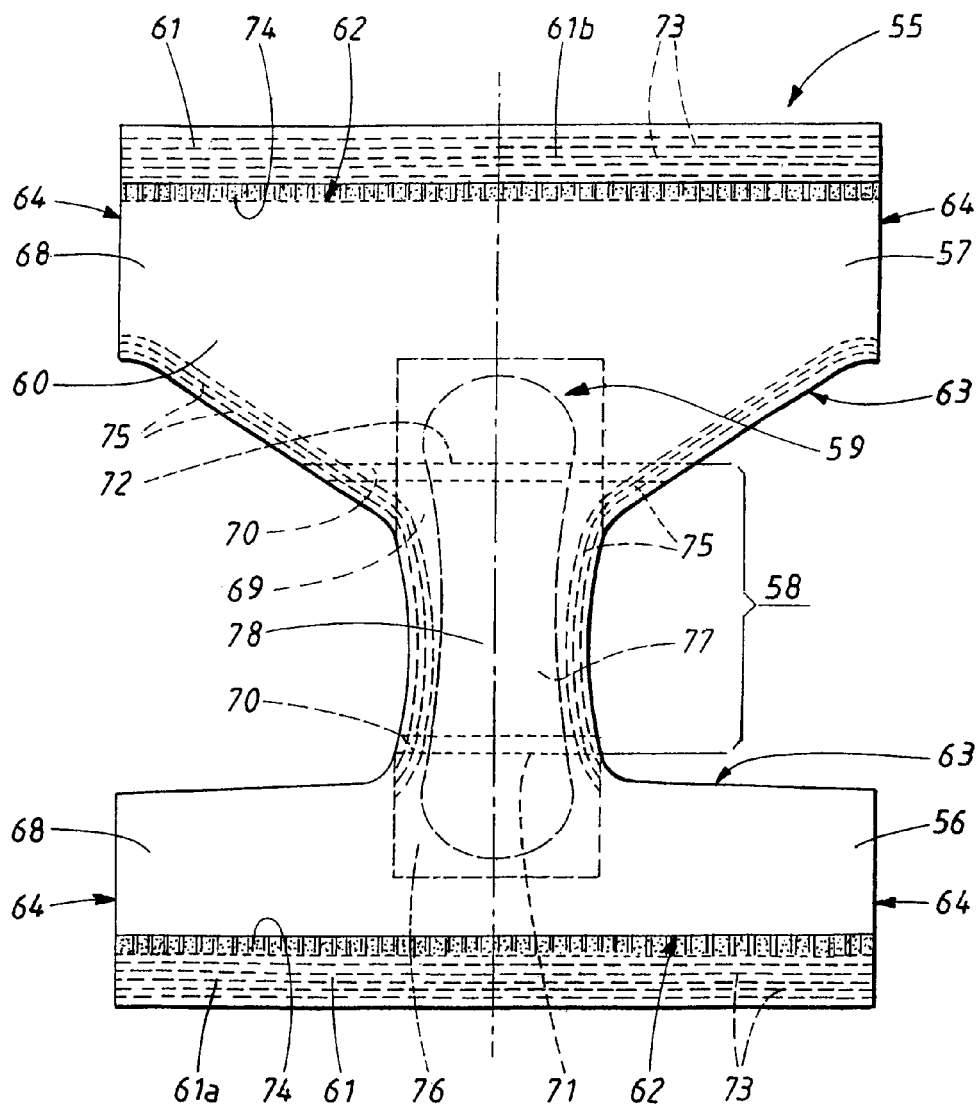


FIG. 5

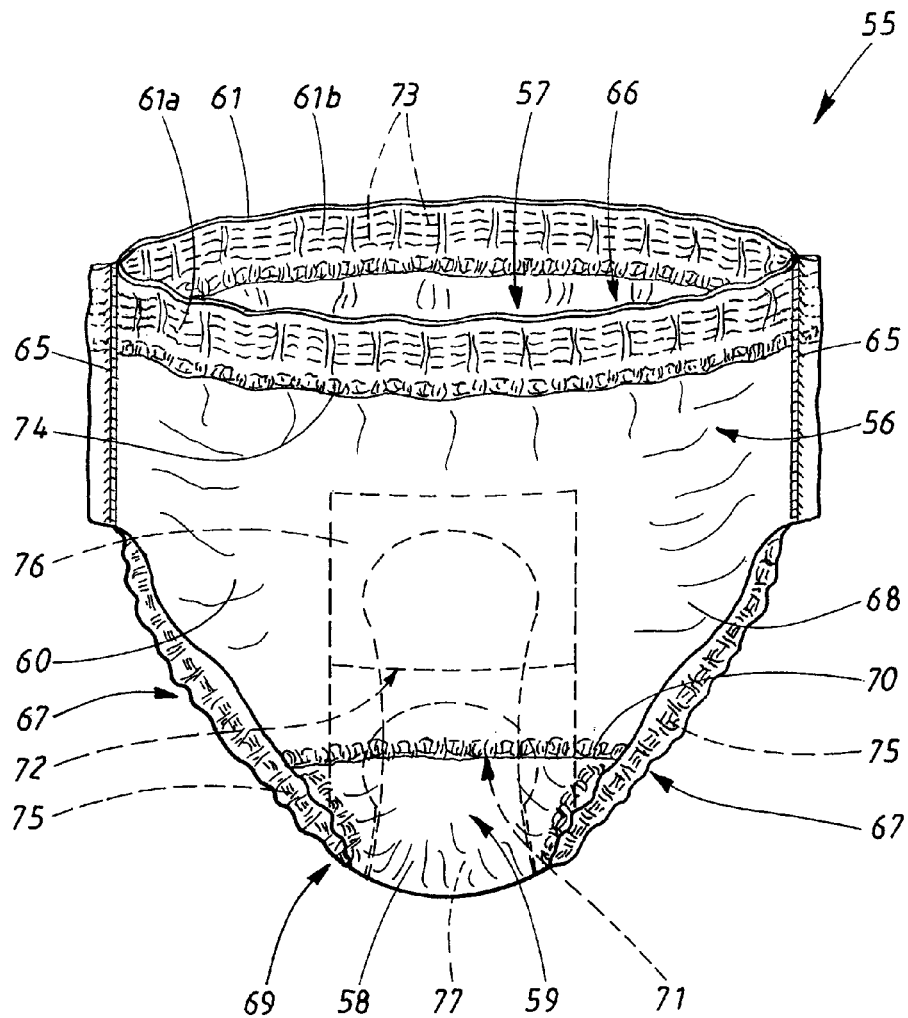


FIG. 6

1

METHOD OF PRODUCING AN ABSORBENT GARMENT, AND AN ABSORBENT GARMENT PRODUCED ACCORDING TO THE METHOD

This is a Division of application Ser. No. 12/739,594 filed on Apr. 23, 2010, which is a National Phase of International Application No. PCT/SE2007/001009 filed on Nov. 14, 2007. The disclosure of the prior applications is hereby incorporated by reference herein in their entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention relates to a method for continuously producing absorbent garments, the method comprising forming a continuous multi-component production web and cutting individual garments from the production web. The invention also concerns an absorbent garment that may be produced according to the method.

BACKGROUND ART

Absorbent garments, particularly disposable pant-type absorbent garments include a pant-shaped chassis structure and an absorbent core component permanently integrated with the chassis. A major objective when designing pant garments is to make them resemble ordinary underwear as closely as possible. For this reason, the garment chassis usually comprises a material that is elastically stretchable, at least in the areas intended to be applied over the wearer's hips. In addition, absorbent garments such as pant diapers, sanitary pants and incontinence pants are designed to fit comfortably and snugly about the wearer and it is desired that they have a minimum of seams and joins that could cause discomfort such as chafing.

Further, absorbent pant-type garments should be capable of being pulled up and down over the hips of the wearer in the manner of a pair of underpants to allow the wearer or caregiver to easily remove a soiled garment and to replace it with a new clean garment. A particular problem with pant-type garments is that seams and joins running in a direction parallel to the waist edge of the garment may rupture when the user or a care-giver is pulling on the garment. In order to avoid this problem, it has to be ascertained that joins between different parts of the disposable pant-type garment are sufficiently strong to withstand the forces arising during normal use. However, strong seals and joins are commonly obtained by increasing the bonding area and/or by using more binder materials or severe binding conditions, resulting in stiffer and more uncomfortable joins.

A further requirement of particular importance for disposable garments is that the garment can be produced by an economically efficient process, involving as few process steps and components as possible.

Hence, there exists a continuing need for an improved process of making a pant-type absorbent garment having a chassis including one or more elastically stretchable components.

Accordingly, an object of the invention is to provide a simple and economic method for producing an absorbent garment such as an elastically stretchable pant-type garment.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

In accordance with the invention, there is provided method for continuously producing absorbent garments comprising forming a continuous multi-component produc-

2

tion web, the production web having an intermediate zone extending in a travelling direction and a first and a second lateral zone on each side of the intermediate zone each lateral zone including an edge zone extending along an edge of the production web; and cutting individual garments from the production web.

The method for forming the production web comprises the steps of:

- a) feeding a first elastic web in the travelling direction;
- b) stretching the first elastic web by 35-250% in the travelling direction;
- c) intermittently laying down absorbent cores in the intermediate zone of the production web;
- c) feeding a continuous web of liquid permeable material in the travelling direction and covering the absorbent cores with the continuous web of liquid permeable material, the continuous web of liquid permeable material having a width at least corresponding to the width of the production web between the edge zones;
- e) bonding the first elastic web to the continuous web of liquid permeable material in the first lateral zone of the production web, the first elastic web being applied to the production web before or after application of the continuous web of liquid permeable material.

The method steps may be carried out in any order as long as the continuous web of liquid permeable material forms an inner liquid permeable surface in the assembled absorbent garment.

The method according to the invention offers a highly economical and efficient way of producing disposable absorbent garments. The finished garments in accordance with the invention have a tailored appearance with a soft continuous inner body-contacting layer and an outer surface that may be a nonwoven or elastic film layer, as desired. The method makes it possible to use a minimum of material layers and components that have to be joined to each other thus reducing production times as well as production costs.

The term absorbent garment as used herein, refers to all kinds of absorbent hygienic garments that are worn as a pair of underpants and that have a waist opening and two leg openings. Garments according to the invention include pant-diapers and open-type diapers for all kinds of users as well as absorbent hygienic panties for feminine protection and incontinence.

In this context, an elastic material is defined as a material having a permanent elongation after relaxation of less than 10% after the material has been subjected to an elongation of 30% in the elasticity test specified hereinafter.

A non-elastic material is a material that does not fall within the definition of an elastic material. Accordingly, a non-elastic material as used herein is a material that may be stretchable or non-stretchable. In the case of a stretchable material, the material has a permanent elongation after stretching and relaxation of more than 10% after having been subjected to an elongation of 30% as determined according to the elasticity test.

The elastic web may be adhesively bonded to the continuous web of liquid permeable material or may be thermally or ultrasonically bonded to the continuous web of liquid permeable material.

Thermal or ultrasonical bonding can be in the form of individual bond elements such as spot bonds or line bonds or can be in the form of a continuous bond pattern. By selecting a bond pattern of sparsely distributed spot bonds, it is possible to achieve a higher flexibility in the resulting laminate than with a pattern of bonds occupying a large proportion of the interface between the bonded layers.

3

The method according to the invention may further include the steps of:

- f) feeding a second elastic web in the travelling direction;
- g) stretching the second elastic web by 35-250% in the travelling direction; and
- h) laminating the second elastic web to the continuous web of liquid permeable material in the second lateral zone of the production web.

The elastic web or webs may be elastic film, elastic nonwoven or an elastic laminate comprising at least one elastic film and/or elastic nonwoven material. The elastic webs may form elastic waist panels and elastic front and back panels in the finished pant-type absorbent garment. In one embodiment of the invention, the elastic web is a laminate of an elastic film and a nonwoven layer and the elastic web is bonded to the continuous web of liquid permeable material with the elastic film facing the continuous web of liquid permeable material.

An elastic material that has previously been used to form elastic panels in absorbent garments such as pant-type diapers is a laminate comprising an elastic film sandwiched between two layers of non-elastic nonwoven. In order to render the laminate elastically stretchable, it is subjected to an activation treatment. A three-layer, activated laminate is disclosed in International Patent Application No. WO 03/047488. The activated laminate is produced by incrementally stretching an elastic film layer between two non-elastic cloth-like layers. Incremental stretching is carried out by passing the laminate between intermeshing gear rollers. Activation of elastic laminates by incremental stretching is also disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,143,679, 5,156,793 5,167,897, 5,422,172, 5,592,690, 5,634,216 and 5,861,074. The non-elastic cloth-like layers are fully or partially broken or torn during the activation process so that the elasticity of the laminate after activation is determined mainly by the elasticity of the elastic film layer. In the three-layer laminate in WO 03/047488, the non-elastic layers are completely broken so that the elasticity of the activated laminate is substantially the same as the elasticity of the elastic film layer.

The disclosed laminates have excellent comfort properties and are soft, breathable and elastic. Unfortunately, the activation process reduces the tensile strength and puncture resistance of the material so that when used as a chassis component in a disposable pant garment, the material is easily torn when exposed to the forces arising when putting on or taking off the pant garment. In order to increase the tensional strength of an activated laminate and to overcome the tearing problem, it has been proposed in PCT/SE2006/000563 to bond a stretch-activated two-layer laminate comprising a nonwoven layer and an elastic film layer to a second reinforcing nonwoven layer while the two-layer laminate is in a stretched state.

For the purpose of the invention, it is also possible to use stretch-bonded elastic laminates comprising an elastic film or nonwoven web that has been bonded to at least one non-elastic layer with the elastic layer being stretched in at least one direction during the bonding step.

Another type of elastic laminates that could be used in the method according to the invention is "neck bonded" laminates, which are laminates in which an elastic material is bonded to a non-elastic material while the non-elastic material is extended under conditions reducing its width. A neck bonded laminate is a composite material having at least two layers in which one layer is a necked, non-elastic layer and the other layer is an elastic layer.

The elastic film used for producing the elastic laminates may be of any suitable elastic polymer, natural or synthetic.

4

One example of an elastic film that has proven to provide good elasticity and breathability is an apertured three-layer elastomeric film with the composition polyethylene-styrene/ethylene/butadiene/styrene-polyethylene (PE-SEBS-PE).

The elastic web or webs used in the process in accordance with the invention may be composed of a layer of fibrous material and an elastic layer. The fibrous layer is preferably chosen so that it provides a soft and cloth-like feel and appearance to the laminate. Examples of suitable materials are meltblown webs, spunbond materials, and creped nonwovens. Creped nonwovens generally have greater extensibility and flexibility than non-creped nonwovens. By using a creped nonwoven, the laminate will be more conformable and extensible than is possible with a non-creped nonwoven.

The basis weight of the nonwoven web used in the elastic laminate is suitably from 10-80 g/m² and preferably from 10-30 g/m². Examples of suitable polymers used in the fibrous material are polyesters, polyethylene, polypropylene and other polyolefin homopolymers and copolymers. Natural fibres, for example cotton, may also be used as long as they provide the desired properties. A mixture of polymers can contribute to a higher flexibility of the nonwoven layer and give the nonwoven material a higher elongation at maximum load. A mixture of polyethylene and polypropylene polymers has proven to provide good results in this respect. However, nonwovens having different fibre mixtures may also be used.

The elastic layer is preferably an apertured elastic film. The elastic layer may have a basis weight of between 10 and 120 g/m², preferably between 15 and 60 g/m². The elastic layer may be of any suitable elastic polymer, natural or synthetic. Some examples of useful materials for the elastic layer are low crystallinity polyethylenes, metallocene-catalyzed low crystallinity polyethylenes, ethylene vinyl acetate copolymers (EVA), polyurethane, polyisoprene, butadiene-styrene copolymers, styrene block copolymers, such as styrene/isoprene/styrene (SIS), styrene/butadiene/styrene (SBS), or styrene/ethylene-butadiene/styrene block copolymer. Blends of these polymers may also be used as well as other modifying elastomeric or non-elastomeric materials. One example of a suitable elastic film is an apertured three-layer elastomeric film with the composition polyethylene-styrene/ethylene/butadiene/styrene-polyethylene (PE-SEBS-PE).

In accordance with the invention, the continuous web of liquid permeable material constitutes a reinforcement layer for the elastic web. Hence, it is possible to use an elastic two-layer laminate or an elastic film layer to elasticise the absorbent garment instead of the prior art three-layer laminates. An elastic two-layer laminate may be manufactured and activated according to either of the methods disclosed in WO 03/047488 or EP 0 715 351 by applying the nonwoven web to one side of the film. The nonwoven web and the film may be extrusion bonded or may be bonded by adhesive. The laminate is incrementally stretched to activate the elasticity of the film layer. Incremental stretching can be made to a point below the elongation at peak load of the nonwoven web to retain some strength in the nonwoven web. Alternatively, the stretching may be carried out so that the nonwoven is completely torn, as disclosed in WO 03/047488.

When laminating a two-layer stretch-activated laminate to the continuous web of liquid permeable material, the two-layer laminate is preferably bonded to the continuous web of liquid permeable material with the film side of the laminate facing the continuous web of liquid permeable material.

5

Thereby, a three-layer laminate is created having a smooth face on the surface where the two-layer laminate is arranged and a somewhat gathered, puckered face on the opposing surface, where the continuous web of liquid permeable material is arranged. In this manner, an absorbent garment having a smooth surface in contact with any clothing worn over the absorbent garment is obtained. The smooth surface of the laminate is aesthetically pleasing and will be less conspicuous when the absorbent article is worn under thin or tight-fitting garments.

Before laminating the elastic web to the continuous web of liquid permeable material, the elastic web is stretched, preferably in the travelling direction, or machine direction, MD by 35-250% of its initial, non-stretched extension and is held in the stretched state during the lamination step. By choosing and controlling the amount of stretch, it is possible to obtain a selected elasticity in the end product. The elastic web is preferably stretched by 35-180% of its non-stretched extension, more preferably by 50-150% of its non-stretched extension and most preferably by 70-120% of its non-stretched extension during lamination with the continuous web of liquid permeable material.

The amount of stretching of the elastic web is specified as a percentage of the initial, non-stretched extension of the laminate in the direction of stretch. Accordingly, a laminate having a first, non-stretched length of 1 m and being stretched by 50% has a second, stretched length of 1.5 m.

The elastic web can be adhesively bonded to the continuous web of liquid permeable material. Alternatively, the elastic web can be thermally or ultrasonically bonded to the continuous web of liquid permeable material. Thermal or ultrasonical bonding can be in the form of discreet bonds such as spot bonds or line bonds. By selecting a bond pattern of sparsely distributed spot bonds, it is possible to obtain a material having higher flexibility and conformability than with a bond pattern occupying a large proportion of the interface between the bonded layers.

A major advantage of the method according to the invention is that it is possible to use a single layer of elastic material such as an elastic film or a two-layer film/nonwoven laminate and still obtain a sufficiently strong elastic panel in the finished absorbent garment. When a two-layer film/nonwoven laminate is used and placed with the nonwoven layer on the outside of the absorbent garment, the overall appearance of the garment will be that of a textile panty with soft and comfortable inner and outer surfaces. The elimination of a layer of material in the garment constitutes a considerable material saving and a corresponding saving of production costs.

The method according to the invention preferably comprises applying a liquid impermeable material on one surface of each absorbent core.

The absorbent core may be bonded to a web of liquid impermeable material, the liquid impermeable web then being cut between the cores into core components comprising an absorbent core and a liquid impermeable barrier layer. Alternatively, the cores are bonded to the web of liquid impermeable material which is subsequently introduced into the production web, without cutting individual core components from the web.

The core components are transferred to the production web and applied to the production web with the liquid impermeable barrier layer facing down on the production web. Depending on how the cores are oriented during bonding to the web of liquid impermeable material, the core components may have to be turned over and/or rotated so that they are incorporated in the production web with the

6

liquid impermeable barrier layers facing away from the continuous web of liquid permeable material and with the cores applied with the longitudinal direction of the cores in the cross-machine direction of the production web. The liquid impermeable barrier layer should have a width that is smaller than the width of the continuous web of liquid permeable material. Accordingly, the liquid impermeable barrier layer should not extend all the way to the edges of the production web and should preferably have the same or only slightly greater extension in the cross-machine direction, CD, of the production web than the cores. The CD extension of the liquid impermeable barrier layer may preferably not be more than 4 cm greater than the CD extension of the cores.

Alternatively, the liquid impermeable material may be joined to the production web before the absorbent cores joined to the production web.

The core components may include further elements such as a supplementary topsheet material which may be a fluid acquisition material, liquid transport members, elastic members, shape-stabilizing members, shaping elements or the like. The components included in the core components can be connected to one another in a conventional manner, for example by adhesive bonding, ultrasonic welding or thermowelding.

The method according to the invention may further include attaching one or more leg elastic members to the production web. The leg elastic members may be applied to the continuous web of liquid permeable material. A further option is to apply the leg elastic members to a separate carrier material that is then incorporated into the production web.

Leg elastic may be applied in any known manner and using any known and commonly used elastic materials. One example of a suitable method of arranging leg elastics is disclosed in WO 2004/078083. When the leg elastic is applied so that it extends across the cores, it may be advantageous to deactivate parts of the elastic member or members extending over the cores. Deactivation may be accomplished in any known manner such as by treating the elastic members with chemicals or heat or by simply cutting the elastic members.

The method according to the invention preferably also includes arranging an elastic waist band along at least one of the edges of the production web. A waist band can be formed by attaching discrete or continuous elastic elements along at least one edge of the continuous web of liquid permeable material and optionally covering the elastic elements with a nonwoven web which may be a folded-over portion of the continuous web of liquid permeable material or a separate nonwoven strip.

An elastic waist band can alternatively be joined to the production web as a separate component that has been prefabricated or that is manufactured in line with the production web.

The elastic waist band is preferably continuously joined to or arranged on the production web and may comprise an elastic band of any suitable kind of material such as elastic laminates, elastic foam strips, elastic nonwovens, non-elastic materials that have been elasticised with elastic threads or strings, etc. A commonly used elastic waist band is made by attaching elastic elements such as threads, bands or strings in a pre-tensioned state between two layers of nonwoven, non-elastic material. All commonly used elastic materials including natural or synthetic rubber, elastic foam, etc. can be employed. A waist band of this type may include two

separate layers of nonwoven or may comprise a single layer of nonwoven material that is folded into a two-layer structure.

Preferably, the elastic waist band includes a portion of the continuous web of liquid permeable material. An advantage of using the continuous web of liquid permeable material when forming the waist band is that the number of stiff and uncomfortable seams and joins can be reduced, giving the garment a soft and tailored appearance and feel. It is particularly preferred to arrange the waist band so that the inner surface of the hygienic garment is smooth without any potentially chafing irregularities.

The elastic waist band may include one or more components of the production web such as the first continuous web of liquid permeable material. In these embodiments, the elastic waist band may include an edge portion of an elastic or non-elastic part of the production web. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the elastic waist band is formed by attaching elastic elements to an edge portion of the first continuous web of liquid permeable material web and subsequently folding the continuous web of liquid permeable material to cover the elastic elements. It is also possible to attach elastic elements to an edge portion of the production web and leave the elastic elements non-covered, or covered by a separate web. If the elastic waist band incorporates an elastic web arranged at an edge portion of the first continuous web of liquid permeable material, the elastic web may be folded to create an edge portion having higher elastic retraction force than the non-folded portion of the part of the production web including only a single elastic web. The folded elastic web may be supplemented by additional elastic elements, if desired.

The method according to the invention may further include any conventional pant-forming production steps such as one or more of the following:

- a) applying raised barriers;
- b) cutting the production web to form leg openings;
- c) folding the production web;
- d) applying fastening elements to the production web;
- e) forming side joins in the folded web, and
- f) separating individual pant-type absorbent garments from the production web by cutting at the side joins.

Raised barriers are commonly used in diapers and similar absorbent garments and. The barriers are attached to the inner surface of the absorbent garment and are often made of hydrophobic nonwoven material. The raised barriers are often elasticated in order to hold the barriers in the raised position.

As an alternative to the formation of side joins, the method may include attaching fastening elements to the production web or to the separated individual absorbent garments.

The invention also offers an absorbent garment comprising a chassis structure comprising a front panel having a front end edge and first and second side edges, a back panel having a back end edge and first and second side edges and a crotch panel being arranged between the front and back panels and elasticated front and back waist panels being arranged along the front and back end edges of the front and back panels, and a core component being integrated with the chassis structure and forming an integral part of the absorbent garment, the chassis structure including a liquid permeable material having a garment facing side and a user facing side and forming a liquid permeable surface layer in the garment. The liquid-permeable material extends continuously between the front end edge and the back end edge and at least one of the front panel and the back panel

comprises an elastic web that has been bonded to the liquid permeable material with the elastic web stretched by 35-250% in at least one direction.

The elastic web in the front and back panels preferably extends from the waist edges all the way to the leg openings of the garment.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the liquid permeable material forms part of one or both of the elasticated front and back waist panels.

An elastic web may have been bonded to each of the front panel and the back panel, the garment having a gap between the elastic webs in the crotch panel (58).

The absorbent garment may be a pant-type garment having the first and second side edges of the front panel being joined by edge joins to the corresponding first and second side edges of the back panel.

The elastic waist panels of the absorbent garment according to the invention may comprise elastic elements that are attached to the liquid-permeable material either on the outer garment-facing side of the liquid-permeable material or on the inner, user-facing side of the liquid-permeable material. The liquid-permeable material may be folded over to cover the elastic elements and may be secured in the folded over configuration by adhesive, thermobonding or ultrasonic welding. The elastic waist panels may comprise a portion of the at least one elastic web.

In accordance with the invention, the absorbent garment has a reinforcing member which is the continuous inner liquid-permeable surface layer or topsheet. The continuous inner surface layer is preferably a non-elastic material and preferably comprises a layer of nonwoven material. Useful materials include meltspun, meltblown and carded nonwovens. The materials may be thermobonded, hydroentangled, needled, thru-air bonded, or bonded with a bonding agent, as desired. The use of a continuous inner layer in the garment reduces the risk of breaking seams and joins between other components in the garment and of tearing materials that have low tensile strength such as stretch-activated elastic segments when putting on the garment. Moreover, seams and joins between components that are bridged by the continuous material can be made less strong, thus reducing welding times in the production process. Further, when less severe bonding conditions and less overlap between materials have to be used, the seams and joins can be made softer and less stiff than in conventional absorbent garments, implying that conformability and comfort of the garment is improved without risking that the garment will break or fall apart during production and handling.

A smooth and continuous inner surface is also beneficial in that it enhances wearer comfort and reduces the risk of chafing and skin irritation. However, it is within the scope of the invention to place one or both of the elastic webs on the inside of the absorbent garment.

The garment may be a pant-type garment having the first and second side edges of the front panel joined by edge joins to the corresponding first and second side edges of the back panel. Alternatively, the garment may be of the open type which is provided with fastening elements that are used to fasten together the front and back panels of the garment when it is being put on a user.

The elastic waist panels may comprise elastic elements that are attached to the liquid-permeable material. The elastic elements may be attached to the garment-facing side of the liquid-permeable material or to the user-facing side of the liquid-permeable material. The liquid-permeable mate-

rial may be folded over to cover the elastic elements or the elastic elements may be uncovered or covered by a separate material.

Further, the elastic waist panels may comprise a portion of the at least one elastic web.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will in the following be described in greater detail with reference to the appended drawings, wherein

FIG. 1 shows schematically a method for producing pant-type absorbent garments in accordance with the invention;

FIG. 2 shows schematically the production of core components;

FIG. 3 shows a cross section through a production web according to a first embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 4 shows a cross section through a production web according to a second embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 5 shows a pant-type diaper in accordance with the invention in a flat state, and

FIG. 6 shows the diaper in FIG. 5 with closed side joins.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIG. 1 shows a method for continuously producing absorbent garments, in particular pant-type diapers, although open-type diapers may be formed by the same general method. The method involves forming a continuous multi-component production web and cutting individual diapers from the production web.

In FIG. 1, a diaper chassis structure is formed from a compound production web 22, comprising a continuous base web 23 of liquid-permeable material and first and second elastic webs 24,25 and first and second waist elastic elements 30,31. The elastic webs 24,25 may be elastic films, elastic nonwoven webs or elastic laminates, as previously disclosed.

The production web 22 has an intermediate zone 2 extending in a travelling direction, the machine direction, MD and a first and a second lateral zone 3,4 on each side of the intermediate zone 2 each lateral zone including an edge zone 6,7 extending along an edge 8,9 of the production web 22. The edge zones are the parts of the lateral zones 3,4 closest to the side edges 8,9 of the production web 22.

The production web 22 is shown to have the different zones 2,3,4 symmetrically distributed in the cross machine direction CD with the intermediate zone 2 centrally located between the lateral zones 3,4 and the lateral zones 3,4 having equal widths. However, for other embodiments of the invention, the intermediate zone may be offset towards one of the side edges 8,9 of the continuous base web 23 implying that the lateral zones 3,4 have different widths.

As shown in FIG. 1, first and second elastic webs 24,25 are fed between two rollers 26,27 in the MD. The elastic webs 24,25 are stretched at least in the machine direction (MD) by 35-250% of their initial, non-stretched extension. As shown in FIG. 1, stretching may be carried out by passing the webs between a pair of rollers 26,27 driven at different speeds. By controlling the amount of stretch, a predetermined elasticity can be obtained in the finished garment chassis. The elastic webs 24,25 are preferably stretched by 35-180% of their non-stretched extension, more preferably by 50-150% of their non-stretched extension and most preferably by 70-120% of their non-stretched extension. The elastic webs 24,25 need not be stretched to the same extent

if different elasticity is desired in different portions of the chassis structure. It is also possible to use different types of elastic materials in the elastic webs 24,25.

The degree of stretching of the elastic webs 24,25 during the formation of the production web 22 is a major means of controlling the elasticity in the portions of the production web 22 where the elastic webs 24,25 are attached.

The stretched elastic webs 24,25 are shown to be laminated to the continuous base web 23 in the lateral zones 3,4 of the production web after absorbent cores 33 have been laid down on the elastic webs 24,25 in the intermediate zone of the production web. Alternatively, the elastic webs 24,25 may be bonded to the continuous base web 23 after the base web has been applied over the absorbent cores 33 or the elastic webs 24,25 may be attached to the continuous base web 23 before the continuous base web 23 is applied over the absorbent cores 33. Accordingly, the elastic webs 24,25 may be applied to either side of the continuous base web 23. Lamination may be carried out by means of any suitable lamination process such as by using a binder, by thermobonding, ultra-sonic welding, etc.

In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the continuous base web 23 is fed in the MD and is applied over the absorbent cores 33. The continuous base web 23 has a width at corresponding to the width of the production web 22. In alternative embodiments, where a waist band is added to the production web 22, the continuous base web 23 may have a width corresponding to the width of the production web 22 between the edge zones 6,7.

It is preferred to use a nonwoven material having thermoplastic properties for the continuous base web 23 as a web containing thermoplastic material can be joined to other components by thermo-welding and ultrasonic welding techniques. The nonwoven layer can also be used to form side joins with good tensile strength. The side joins are preferably breakable side joins, i.e. welds that may be peeled or torn apart when the garment is removed after use.

Core components 32 are produced in a separate process as shown in FIG. 2 and are intermittently laid down on the production web 22 as shown in FIG. 1. The core components 32 are placed in the intermediate zone 2 of the production web 22 with portions of the core components 32 extending into each lateral zone 3,4. If desired, the core components 32 may be bonded to the continuous base web 23 and/or to the elastic webs 24,25 with adhesive or by any other conventionally employed bonding method.

The core components 32 may be produced as shown in FIG. 2, the process including feeding a web 34 of liquid impermeable material and laying down and bonding absorbent cores 33 to the web of liquid impermeable material 34. Individual core components 32 are formed by severing the web 34 of liquid impermeable material between the absorbent cores 33 at a cutting station 29. The cutting station 29 is shown as a cutting wheel, but may be any kind of cutting apparatus. It is also conceivable to cut the liquid impermeable web into a shape corresponding to the shape of the absorbent core 33 or into any other suitable shape.

Before joining the core components 32 to the production web 22, the core components 32 are oriented so that the liquid impermeable barrier material is facing away from the continuous web of liquid permeable material 23 in the production web 22. Moreover, the core components 32 are rotated to bring the longitudinal direction of the cores 33 into alignment with the cross machine direction, CD of the production web 22.

The core components in FIG. 2 may, of course, comprise additional elements as conventional in the art. Accordingly,

11

the core components may comprise elastic elements, one or more absorbent members, liquid handling structures, shape retaining elements, etc. It is to be understood that the construction of the core component 32 and the absorbent core 33 is by no means limiting to the invention. Hence, any commonly employed core concepts and materials may be used in the process according to the invention. In addition, the core may have any suitable shape and size, as required by the intended use that the garment is designed for.

Waist elastic elements 30,31 are attached along the edges 8,9 of the continuous base web 23 in the edge zones 6,7 of the production web 22 and the elastic elements 30,31 are then covered by folding the continuous base web 23 over the elastic elements 30,31 to form a waist band along each edge of the production web 22. In the process in FIG. 1, the elastic elements 30,31 are attached on the side of the continuous base web 23 that will be a garment-facing side in the absorbent garment and the continuous base web 23 is then folded over on the garment-facing side of the continuous base web 23 and bonded in the folded-over configuration to the continuous base web 23 or to the elastic webs 24,25. In this manner the side of the continuous base web 23 that will be a body-facing side in the absorbent garment, can be made smooth and without discontinuities. However, according to other embodiments of the invention, the waist elastic elements may be placed on the bodyfacing side of the continuous base web 23 and may be covered by a portion of the continuous base web 23 that is folded over towards the bodyfacing side of the continuous base web 23 to produce a, seamless garment-facing surface at the waist border of the garment.

In the process in FIG. 1, the continuous base web 23 has a width that is equal to the width of the production web 22. This is a preferred arrangement since the continuous base web 23 will then be a carrier web for all components in the production web 22. Moreover, the continuous base web 23 may be used to form a soft, comfortable and seam-free inner surface of an absorbent garment produced from the production web as shown in FIG. 3. An absence of seams on the inner surface is beneficial in that it reduces the risk of skin irritation. In any case, by minimising the number of seams and joins in the absorbent garment, the garment becomes more flexible and conformable than prior art garments. The continuous base web 23 will also be a reinforcing member, reducing the risk of breaking seams and joins between other components in the garment and of tearing materials that have low tensile strength such as stretch-activated elastic laminates.

The elastic webs 24,25 in FIG. 1 are laminated to the continuous base web 23 in the lateral zones 3,4 of the production web 22 but cover only a small portion of the edge zones 6,7. This means that the waist bands in the FIG. 1 embodiment will be formed mainly from the folded portions of the continuous base web 23 and the elastic elements 30,31 inside the folds. Waist elastic may alternatively be formed by applying the elastic webs 24,25 all the way to one or both edges 8,9 of the production web 22 and folding the edge portions of the production web 22 to form a waist band comprising two layers of the elastic web 24,25 and optionally one or two layers of the continuous base web 23. The waist band may further be supplemented with additional elastic elements. A further option is to create a waist band at one or both edges of the production web 22 by attaching elastic elements to the web and optionally covering the elastic elements with a separate nonwoven strip. The elastic elements 30,31 in FIG. 1 are shown as continuous threads.

12

However, the elastic elements may be any type of elastic material that is used for elasticating absorbent garments such as elastic bands and tapes comprising elastic nonwoven, laminates, film, net, foam, etc. The waist elastic does not have to be continuous as in FIG. 1 but can be applied in the form of discrete pieces of material attached intermittently along one or both edges of the production web 22.

The production web may also comprise leg elastics applied to one or more of the continuous base web 23, the core components, the elastic webs 24,25 or a separate carrier member. The leg elastics can be any conventionally used elastic elements such as one or more elastic threads, bands, etc. One suitable way of arranging leg elastic on a production web is disclosed in WO 2004/078083.

When the production web 22 has been assembled, a portion 44 is cut out from the production web 22 between the core components 32 to create leg openings 45. The cut-out portions extend in the CD over the intermediate zone and into each lateral zone. In this manner, the elastic webs 24, 25 extend all the way to the leg openings in the finished garment 21. The production web and the integrated core components 32 are then folded centrally in the machine direction MD and the web halves are joined in side seams 46 between the core components. Finally, individual pant diapers 21 are cut from the production web.

Side joins are often arranged in a pant-type garment to connect the garment's front portion to the rear portion and to form a pant having a waist opening and leg openings. Usually, the side joins are intended to be arranged at the user's hips during use of the absorbent pants, but it is also known to arrange side joins more to the front of the garment. Side joins that are placed at the front of the garment may be made after severing individual garments from the production web. The side joins are preferably designed so that they can withstand the tensile forces which arise when the garment is being put on and is being worn, but such that they can be torn apart or opened in a controlled manner when the absorbent pants are taken off or to check if the garment needs changing. In the latter instance, the side joins are preferably reclosable joins, as known in the art.

Moreover, if the garment is an open-type diaper of the kind that is fastened together into a pant-shape when the diaper is put on a user, the process does not involve forming side seams. Instead, the process will normally include arranging fastening elements on the production web or on the garments after they have been cut from the web. Commonly used fastening elements for open-type diapers are mating hook-and-loop fasteners or adhesive fasteners.

FIG. 3 is a section through the production web 22 taken in the cross machine direction, CD, before folding of the web and cutting it into individual absorbent garments. Accordingly, FIG. 3 shows a longitudinal section through an absorbent garment that may be a pant diaper or a sanitary panty that has not yet been folded and provided with side seams or may be an open-type diaper.

When seen as components in an absorbent garment, the continuous base web 23 forms a liquid permeable topsheet 78 and front and back elastic waist bands 61. The elastic webs 24,25 that are laminated to the continuous base web 23 form front and back panels 56,57 of a chassis structure that also includes a crotch panel 58 formed from the liquid barrier layer 34 of the core component 32. FIG. 2 does not show all the different elements of the core component. The liquid barrier layer 34 may be covered by an outer crotch nonwoven that is not shown in FIG. 3 or 4. The outer crotch nonwoven should be chosen to be a non-elastic material to

13

ensure that the crotch portion of the garment according to the invention is generally non-elastic.

FIG. 4 shows a longitudinal section through an absorbent garment similar to that in FIG. 3 but with the elastic webs 24,25 arranged on the inside or topsheet 78 side of the continuous base web 23. The elastic webs 24,25 are also shown to extend into the elastic waist bands 61 and form part of the waist bands 61. The elastic webs 24,25 are folded in the edge portions 6,7 of the production web 22 to create the elasticated waist bands 61.

The elastic webs 24,25 are shown in FIGS. 3 and 4 to extend in over the absorbent core 33 of the core component 32. However, in an alternative embodiment, the elastic webs 24,25 may be applied to the continuous base web 23 without overlap with the absorbent core 33. Preferably, the elastic webs 24,25 extend all the way to the leg opening cut-outs 45 so that the front and back panels of the finished absorbent garment 21 extend all the way to the leg openings. Similarly, the elastic webs 24,25 may extend all the way to into the elastic waist bands 61 and even be folded together with the continuous base web 23 in the waist bands 61. However, there is preferably a gap between the elastic webs 24,25 in the crotch panel 58. This means that the edges of the elastic webs 24,25 that are farthest away from the edges 8,9 of the production web are located at distance from each other. The crotch panel 58 is located in a part of the absorbent article that will normally be generally non-elastic due to the absorbent core being non-elastic.

The process according to the invention may in a conventional manner include the application of further elements such as elasticised or non-elasticised barriers, lotion, odour control agents, shaping elements, stabilising elements, etc.

Particularly, the process may include treating the continuous base web 23 so that it is provided with areas of different hydrophilicity or hydrophobicity. Hydrophobic polymeric materials are commonly used in topsheets for absorbent articles. In order to improve liquid permeability, the materials are treated with surfactants or by modification of the surface of the materials to render them more hydrophilic. Preferably, a portion of the continuous base web that covers the absorbent cores is treated to render it more hydrophilic or less hydrophobic than portions of the base web 23 that are located outside of the absorbent cores. Accordingly, the more hydrophobic portions of the base web may be used to form the elastic waist band and those parts of the back and front panels that are not coincident with the cores. A simple way of accomplishing differential hydrophilicity in the continuous base web 23 is to treat an area of the base web 23 extending in the MD and having a width that is equal to the length of the absorbent cores. Alternatively, the treatment may be carried out intermittently, so that the parts of the continuous base web 23 located between the absorbent cores in the MD are left untreated.

It is alternatively possible to use a hydrophilic base web 23 and treat the portions that should be less hydrophilic or more hydrophobic with a hydrophobicity enhancing agent.

The pant diaper 55 shown in FIGS. 5 and 6 is designed to enclose the lower part of a wearer's trunk in the manner of conventional underwear. In FIG. 5, the diaper 55 is shown from the inside, i.e. from the side facing the wearer when the garment is worn and in FIG. 6, the diaper is shown from the outside, or the garment-facing side, which is the side that is facing away from the wearer when the diaper is worn. In FIG. 5 the diaper is shown in a flat state with all elastic elements in a stretched-out state and in FIG. 6 the diaper is shown as it appears when it is worn, with partially contracted elastic elements and with closed side seams.

14

The diaper has a front panel 56, a back panel 57 and a crotch panel 58 extending between the front and back panels 56,57 and having a relatively narrow width as compared to the front and back panels 56,57. The front and back panels 56,57 are arranged to cover the wearer's hips and to extend over the belly and the back of the wearer to encircle the lower part of the wearer's trunk.

The diaper 55 further comprises a core region 59 extending from the crotch panel 58 into the front panel 56 and the back panel 57. The front and back panels 56,57 form part of a diaper chassis. The chassis 60 comprises the front panel 56, the back panel 57 the crotch panel 58 and an elastic waist band 61 arranged at the front and back panels 56,57. Each of the front and back panels 56,57 has a waist edge 62 a crotch edge 63 and a pair of side edges 64.

The term "panel" is used herein to denote a delimited part of the diaper chassis having defined boundaries while the terms "region" and "portion" are used to denote a more approximate location of a particular feature of the diaper in the chassis or to describe the intended positioning of a particular part of the diaper in relation to a user's body. A panel may be formed from separate materials or may be completely or partially formed from materials that also extend into one or more contiguous panels. A region or portion may have an extension fully or partially covering one or more panels. The chassis is defined as the part of the pant-type absorbent garment supporting the absorbent component and comprises inner and outer covering layers, elastic elements, etc.

When components are joined, attached or secured to each other, they are originally separate parts that have been bonded by any suitable means such as adhesively, by stitching or by ultrasonic welding or thermo-welding. The term joined is also intended to include separable (openable) joins, such as separable side joins and reclosable joins such as hook-and loop joins, reclosable tape joins, snap fasteners, etc. Components that have been arranged on each other need not be bonded, although as used herein, the term "arranged" is intended to also include bonded configurations.

The front and back panels 56,57 have been joined to each other along their side edges 64 by thermobonding, ultrasonic welding, glue strings or the like to form side seams 65, as shown in FIG. 6. The elastic waist band 61 consists of a front waist panel 61a and a back waist panel 61b, extending from the front panel 56 and the back panel 57, respectively. The front and back waist panels 61a, 61b are also joined to each other along the side seams 65. By joining the front and back panels 56, 57 and the waist panels 61a, 61b, along the side seams 65, the pant diaper 55 is provided with a waist opening 66 and a pair of leg openings 67.

FIG. 5 shows the diaper 55 in a flat state with any elastic components that are attached to the chassis 60 under tensional stress drawn out to the fully extended dimensions of the chassis 60. FIG. 6 shows the pant diaper 55 as it appears when the side seams 65 have been formed and the tensioned elastic elements have been allowed to relax and gather the chassis material to form elasticized leg openings 67 and an elasticized waist opening 66.

In accordance with the invention, the front and back panels 56,57 include an elastic material 68 that has been laminated to a non-elastic nonwoven layer arranged on the inside of the diaper. The front and back panels 56,57 are preferably elastically stretchable at least in the direction of the waist edges 62 but may also be elastically stretchable perpendicular to the waist edges 62, in the direction of the

15

side edges **64**. The elastic material **68** and the front and back panels **56,57** extend from the waist edges **62** all the way to the leg openings **67**.

The crotch panel **58** is the part of the chassis that is located between the front and back panels **56, 57** in the longitudinal direction of the diaper **55**. The crotch panel comprises a nonwoven crotch material **69** that has been joined to the front and back panels **56,57** at crotch seams **70**. Hence, the crotch material **69** which is a non-elastic material, such as a non-elastic nonwoven material overlaps slightly with the elastic front and back panels **56,57**. The crotch material **69** is joined along its transverse edges **71,72** to the front and back panels **56,57** at the overlapping portions. The joining can be made in any suitable way such as by ultrasonic welding, adhesively or similar.

The planar extension of the core region **59** is defined by a liquid-impervious barrier sheet **76** arranged between an absorbent core **77** and the chassis **60**. The liquid-impervious barrier sheet **76** is shown to have a rectangular shape and the absorbent core **77** is hour-glass shaped. However, both the barrier sheet **76** and the absorbent core **77** may have alternative shapes.

As an alternative to the embodiment shown in FIGS. **5** and **6**, it is possible to dispense with the nonwoven crotch material. In such an embodiment, the liquid-impervious barrier sheet **76** forms the crotch panel of the chassis.

A liquid permeable topsheet **78** is arranged over the core **77** and the liquid-impervious barrier sheet **76**. The topsheet **78** forms a continuous inner surface of the diaper chassis **60** and consists of a layer of nonwoven material or a liquid permeable laminate comprising a nonwoven layer. As previously discussed, in embodiments where the elastic webs **24,25** are bonded to the inner surface of the continuous liquid permeable layer, the inner surface of the diaper chassis **60** comprises the elastic webs **24,25** arranged in the front and back panels **56,57**.

The liquid-impervious barrier sheet **76** can consist of a liquid-impermeable plastic film, a nonwoven sheet which has been coated with a liquid barrier material, or some other flexible material sheet which has the ability to withstand liquid penetration. However, it can be advantageous if the liquid-impervious barrier sheet **76** is breathable, i.e. permits the passage of water vapour through the sheet **76**.

The absorption core **77** comprises absorbent material, such as cellulose fluff pulp, tissue, absorbent foam, etc. It is also possible for the absorption core to contain superabsorbents, i.e. polymer materials which are able to absorb body fluid corresponding to many times their own weight and form a hydrogel. Superabsorbents are usually provided in the form of particles, but fibres, flakes, granules and films are also available. Moreover, the absorption core **77** can comprise non-absorbent components such as stiffening elements, shaping elements, binders, etc. Various types of liquid-receiving porous structures such as fibre wads, open-cell foam or the like can also be included in the core.

The absorption core **77** may be produced separately and included in a core component **32** that is subsequently integrated in the diaper chassis as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**. The various components included in the core component can be connected to one another in a conventional manner, for example by adhesive bonding, ultrasonic welding or thermowelding. The core component comprises at least an absorbent core having a barrier layer applied as a carrier layer on one surface of the core. Preferably, a liquid permeable layer such as a liquid acquisition layer is applied to the opposite side of the core. Further components such as

16

elastic members, shape-stabilizing members, shaping elements or the like may also be included.

In the diaper shown in FIGS. **5** and **6**, the elastic waist band **61** is formed from extensions of the continuous inner nonwoven topsheet material at the waist edges **62**. The nonwoven material has been elasticized by one or more elongate elastic members **73**, such as elastic threads or bands. The elastic members **73** have been attached to an edge portion of the nonwoven topsheet **78** material whereafter the topsheet material has been folded to cover the elastic members **73** and has been secured in the folded configuration in a waist band join **74**. The elastic members **73** may be secured on the side of the nonwoven topsheet material **78** that forms the inner surface of the diaper **55** or on the opposite side. Preferably, the elastic members **73** are arranged on the surface that is opposite to the inner surface of the diaper so that the folded-over portion of the nonwoven material if folded towards the outside of the diaper **55** leaving a smooth, continuous surface without any seams or edges on the inside of the diaper. It is alternatively possible to attach elastic elements to an edge portion of the topsheet material **78** and leave the elastic elements non-covered, or covered by a separate web. Further, the elastic waist band **61** may incorporate portions of the elastic webs arranged at the front and back panels **55,66**. The elastic webs may be folded to create an edge portion having higher elastic retraction force than a single-layer elastic web. The folded elastic web may be supplemented by additional elastic elements, if desired.

The elastic members **73** are arranged in the waist band **61** in a tensioned state such that they contract and gather the nonwoven material in the waist band **61** when they are allowed to relax, as shown in FIG. **6**.

In an alternative, less preferred embodiment, the elastic waist band **61** can be a component that is prefabricated and joined to the outside or the inside of the front and back panels **56,57** respectively. The waist band join **74** between the waist band **61** and the front and back panels **56,57** can be made in any suitable way such as by means of ultrasonic welding, heat welding, or adhesively.

Elastic members **75** are also arranged along the edges of the leg openings **67** and form leg elastic. The elastic members **75** at the leg openings can be any kind of conventional elastic elements such as elastic threads, bands, foam strips, or similar.

The core region **59** extends into the front and back panels **56,57** so that the elastic web **68** in these panels overlap with the liquid-impervious barrier sheet **76** in the outer parts of the core region **59** as seen in FIG. **5**. The elastic web **68** is arranged on the garment-facing side of the liquid-impervious barrier sheet **76**.

The continuous inner nonwoven topsheet material has preferably been treated so that the portions of the material covering the absorbent core are more hydrophilic than portions of the topsheet material being located outside the intended fluid-receiving area of the article.

The elastic web **68** in the front and back panels **56,57** preferably comprises a nonwoven web that is arranged on the outside of the diaper to create a textile outer garment-facing surface of the diaper. Alternatively, the elastic web may consist of or include an elastic film that forms an outer surface of the diaper.

Elasticity Test

The method measures how an elastic material behaves at cycles of repeated load and unload. The sample is stretched to a predetermined elongation and a cyclic movement between 0 and said predetermined elongation is performed.

17

Desired load and unload forces are recorded. The permanent, i.e. remaining, elongation of the relaxed material is measured.

A tensile tester, Lloyd LRX, able to perform cyclic movements and equipped with a printer/plotter or software presentation is used. The sample is prepared by cutting it to a width of 25 mm and a length that is preferably 20 mm longer than the distance between the clamps in the tensile tester.

The tensile tester is calibrated according to the apparatus instructions. The parameters needed for the test (load and unload forces) are adjusted to:

Crosshead speed: 500 mm/min

Clamp distance: 50 mm

Preload: 0.05 N

The sample is placed in the clamps according to the marks and it is made sure that the sample is centred and fastened perpendicularly in the clamps. The tensile tester is started and three cycles between 0 and the predetermined elongation equal to the highest defined 1st load are performed. Before the last cycle, the sample is relaxed for 1 minute, then the permanent elongation is measured by stretching the sample until a force of 0.1 N is detected and the elongation is read.

An elastic material is defined as a material having a permanent elongation after relaxation of less than 10% after the material has been subjected to an elongation of 30% in the test above. An elongation of 30% means an elongation to a length that is 30% longer than the initial length of the sample.

A non-elastic material has a permanent elongation after relaxation of more than 10% after having been subjected to an elongation of 30%.

The invention claimed is:

1. An absorbent garment comprising a chassis structure having a garment-facing side and a user-facing side and comprising a front panel having a front end edge and first and second side edges, a back panel having a back end edge and first and second side edges, a crotch panel being arranged between the front and back panels, elasticated front and back waist panels being arranged along the front and back end edges of the front and back panels, and a core component being integrated with the chassis structure and forming an integral part of the absorbent garment, the chassis structure including a liquid permeable material provided over the core component on the user-facing side of the chassis structure so that the liquid permeable material is configured to be located between the core component and the skin of a user when the absorbent garment is attached to the user, the liquid permeable material forming a liquid permeable surface layer in the absorbent garment,

wherein the liquid permeable material extends continuously between the front end edge and the back end edge and at least one of the front panel and the back panel comprises an elastic web that extends from the first side edge to the second side edge of the at least one of the front panel and the back panel, and the entire elastic web has been bonded to the liquid permeable material when the entire elastic web is stretched by 35-250% in at least one direction.

18

2. The absorbent garment according to claim 1, wherein the liquid permeable material forms part of one or both of the elasticated front and back waist panels.

3. The absorbent garment according to claim 1, wherein an elastic web has been bonded to each of the front panel and the back panel only, so that there is a gap between the elastic web of the front panel and the elastic web of the back panel in the crotch panel.

4. The absorbent garment according to claim 1, wherein the first and second side edges of the front panel are joined by edge joins to the corresponding first and second side edges of the back panel.

5. The absorbent garment according to claim 1, wherein the elasticated front and back waist panels comprise elastic elements that are attached to the liquid-permeable material.

6. The absorbent garment according to claim 5, wherein the elastic elements are attached to a garment-facing side of the liquid-permeable material.

7. The absorbent garment according to claim 5, wherein the elastic elements are attached to a user-facing side of the liquid-permeable material.

8. The absorbent garment according to claim 5, wherein the liquid-permeable material is folded over to cover the elastic elements and is secured in the folded over configuration.

9. The absorbent garment according to claim 1, wherein the elasticated front and back waist panels comprise a portion of the elastic web.

10. The absorbent garment according to claim 1, wherein the crotch panel is arranged between the front panel and the back panel in a longitudinal direction of the absorbent garment, the absorbent garment having a longitudinal centerline in the longitudinal direction, and each of the elasticated front and back waist panels extends across the longitudinal centerline of the absorbent garment.

11. An absorbent garment comprising a chassis structure comprising a front panel having a front end edge and first and second side edges, a back panel having a back end edge and first and second side edges, a crotch panel being arranged between the front and back panels, elasticated front and back waist panels being arranged along the front and back end edges of the front and back panels, and a core component being integrated with the chassis structure and forming an integral part of the absorbent garment, the chassis structure including a liquid permeable material having a garment facing side and a user facing side and forming a liquid permeable surface layer in the absorbent garment,

wherein the liquid permeable material extends continuously between the front end edge and the back end edge and at least one of the front panel and the back panel comprises an elastic web that extends from the first side edge to the second side edge of the at least one of the front panel and the back panel, and the entire elastic web has been bonded to the liquid permeable material when the entire elastic web is stretched by 35-250% in at least one direction, and

wherein the liquid permeable material is treated to render it more hydrophilic or less hydrophobic in an area of the liquid permeable material that covers the core component than in an area of the liquid permeable material that is located outside of the core component.

* * * * *